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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s higher education has been increasingly challenged to be excellent, be accessible, and to prove it, as the emphasis on accountability and outcomes assessment (OA) has emerged. This study explores how institutional requirements for OA and the attitudes and beliefs of music faculty and music program administrators may be related to the implementation of OA in higher education. Information about attitudes and beliefs was collected by survey from a random sample of music faculty and program administrators in 104 North Central Association (NCA) universities and colleges. Surveys were constructed to identify faculty and administrator understanding of the NCA definition of OA (definition alignment), their attitudes about OA validity, and their perceptions about the level of implementation of OA in the music program. Correlation analyses and multiple regressions were applied to the data. Findings reveal a negative relationship between individuals' understanding of the NCA definition and their attitudes about the validity of outcomes assessment to the music program. Results and implications are discussed. (Contains 4 tables and 21 references.) (BT)

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Implementation and Use of Outcomes Assessment in Music Degree Programs: How the Varied Voices of Faculty and Program Administrators Contribute to Program Quality Improvement

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Introduction

As universities and colleges strive to achieve quality improvement in academic programs while resources dwindle, various external pressures have either facilitated or hindered the implementation of new policy and practice in the quest for quality. In the early 1960s, pressure was placed on higher education to "search for excellence". In the late 1960s and early 1970s, pressure for equitable access created tension with the search for excellence that some perceived was an irreconcilable difference in higher education's mission. More recently, in the 1990s, higher education has been increasingly challenged to be excellent, be accessible, and to prove it, as the emphasis on accountability and outcomes assessment (OA) has emerged (Dixon, 1994).

Of course, OA is not a new concept to higher education. In one way or another students have been assessed by faculty through final exams, oral exams, research papers, and so on for as long as students have pursued degrees. The newer trend of providing accountability through OA however, places the emphasis on assessing the assessor--using student success on OA measures to determine the success of the institution.

History of Assessment

In a background paper on OA, Scot Lingrell (1992) discusses the historical progression of OA in institutions of higher education in the United States. First was the ministry and its practice of public oral exams by "outsiders" to the institution that evaluated student performance and faculty accomplishment. Due to the rapid growth in numbers in higher education, by the latter 1800s, alternative assessment methods were

deemed necessary. This shift ultimately put the institution's faculty in place as the assessor of both student preparation and faculty effectiveness, and eventuated the pervading attitude of elitism whereby faculty presume only they are competent to make judgments of educational achievement. For the past century, the presumption of unquestioned authority has all but remained embedded in institutions of higher education, but the movement toward accountability and assessment specifically aims at dispelling this philosophy.

Prior to 1985-89, the basis for accreditation judgments of institutions of higher education was inputs. The ensuing trend toward institutional effectiveness or outcomes assessment, both based on evidence of student academic achievement, was initiated by the push for accountability which centers attention on assessing teaching effectiveness (Derlin et al., 1996). Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and King's College in Pennsylvania were among the first institutions reputed to move toward the ideals of assessment as a means to evaluate and contribute to student progress and performance as well as improve and validate curriculum and instruction (Banta, 1991; Lingrell, 1992).

By early 1990, over 40% of states adopted or planned to adopt various policies under the broad umbrella of assessment (Aper & Hinkle, 1991), and Chamberlain et al. (1991) report that although policies varied from state to state, the ultimate result was the attempt to measure student outcomes as a way of judging the effectiveness of an institution and its integral components. William Benett directed the Department of Education to adopt a nationwide requirement that all regional accrediting agencies include assessment components as part of their accreditation provisions. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) appears to have been a leader in the national movement towards outcomes assessment, calling for institutions to evaluate effectiveness and use results in continuous planning and evaluation processes (Chamberlain et al., 1991). In addition, many independent institutions have implemented their own programs of outcomes assessment, as well as state-level

agencies and officials who are also noted for expressing a strong interest in outcomes (Chamberlain et al. 1991; Sims, 1992).

At the national level, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) in 1988 postulated seven guiding principles regarding assessment practices in the states, which are in accordance with the widely held institution-centered philosophy of assessment policy. NASULGC emphasizes use of multiple methods of assessment and both NASULGC and SACS link assessment to institutional planning, program review and improvement (Aper & Hinkle, 1991).

These new calls for outcomes assessment have been addressed by the six regional accrediting bodies of colleges and schools (North Central, Southern, Middle States, New England, Northwestern, and Western). Previously, through voluntary compliance, accreditation achieved was considered sufficient evidence of institutional quality. Currently, issues of accountability have usurped this long standing tradition, in favor of more specific documentation of institutional effectiveness.

History of Accreditation

There is an inherent relationship between accountability and accreditation in institutions of higher education in the United States. Thrash, (1992) explains accreditation is a nongovernmental, voluntary way of confirming an institution is maintaining acceptable quality, and is continuously improving institutional activities. Ewell (1992) contends that in accreditation, the primary focus of standards and practices should be the institution's efforts in identifying and implementing processes by which evidence of institutional goal attainment may be displayed. This maintains autonomy, but simultaneously forces institutions of higher education to consider themselves as a whole.

Accountability without intrusion has continuously been a concern in higher education. A 1994 Special Report on Accreditation posted by the National Policy Board on Higher Education gives a summative history of institutions of higher education's

struggle to maintain self-governance. The initial event listed is the New York Board of Regents establishment of broad regulatory authority of all educational institutions in 1784. In the following century the founding of various professional state licensing associations, the establishment of the Office of Education, and the establishment of regional associations were attempts to maintain self-governance while simultaneously providing external accountability. As early as 1910 the first college and university accreditation effort was developed by the NCA. Soon after, the National Association of State Universities and the Association of Land-Grant Colleges (now AASCU and NASULGC) were established by the Joint Committee on Accrediting to confront proliferation of accrediting entities.

Such interests ensued, and through the 1950s the United States Commissioner of Education was required to develop and publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies. In 1968 a process for recognizing accrediting associations was designed. By 1992 Congress was involved in creating the State Postsecondary Review Entities (SPREs) to conducting institutional reviews and impose new requirements on accrediting agencies seeking recognition. It was in June of 1993 that the National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation (NPB) was established by the heads of nine regional accrediting commissions and seven national higher education associations to consider problems and pose solutions to current issues facing accreditation (NPB, 1994).

NCA and Outcomes Assessment

In efforts to comply with mandated requirements, and perhaps in efforts to maintain autonomy while meeting the public's cry for accountability, the North Central Association (NCA) accrediting body has addressed issues of OA within its accreditation process. Since 1994, the NCA has explicitly imposed outcomes assessment requirements as a part of its accreditation process. These requirements include documentation of proficiency in essential skills and competencies, completion of an identifiable and

coherent undergraduate general education program, and mastery of the level of knowledge appropriate to the degree granted. In addition, the NCA provides direction to institutions subject to these requirements specifying that OA should be structured, continuous, involve a variety of institutional constituencies, and provide meaningful and useful information to the planning processes as well as to the students, faculty and administration (Handbook of Accreditation, 1994).

In general, requirements to implement outcomes assessment and the rational process imposed by NCA are met with little resistance. Most frequently, a process is determined at the department level with outside validation required on some time frame. Despite faculty fears that misuse of OA information may jeopardize academic programs, indications are that departments that do OA thoughtfully (continuous self-reflection and improvement) are those that are strongest in academic quality (Miller, 1993).

Literature in the field indicates that the level of implementation of OA programs varies from institution to institution, and across disciplines even though requirements by accrediting agencies are identical. The literature suggests that some of the variance may be related to the attitudes and perceptions of administrators and faculty involved in the system (Cervantes, 1997). Another factor that may influence the level of OA implementation is the divergent academic programs within the institution. For example, the unique aspects of arts programs challenge the inherently rational approaches to OA typically employed in universities and colleges and specified within the NCA guidelines. Both the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) and the Council of Arts Accrediting Associations (CAAA), a joint ad hoc effort of the National Associations of Schools of Art and Design, of Dance, of Music, and of Theatre, have approached implementation of externally imposed OA with caution, suggesting that the best approach to OA is artistic, not technical.

NASM and Outcomes Assessment

Unlike the NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994), the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) 1997-98 Handbook does not contain an explicit statement regarding implementation of outcomes assessment measures. However, under the heading *Operational Standards: Evaluation, Planning and Projections*, the broader goals of current effectiveness, systematic approaches to the future, and the understanding of potential contexts and conditions are addressed. The directed primary consideration is the educational and artistic development of students. Expressed direction for "regular, systematic" evaluation of indicators of student achievement is given along with explanation that various indicators should produce a composite view of attained educational and artistic goals and objectives. As with outcomes assessment, the handbook states resulting data should be integrated into future planning. Unlike the NCA stance on OA, the NASM continues to link the above with established NASM competentcies of student performance and productive relationships between priorities and resource allocations.

In a 1997 Community Education publication by the NASM, the assessment philosophies are discussed in relation to ensuring effective interaction between concepts, operations, program scope and resources. It is suggested missions, goals and objectives are necessary and should be clear before it can be determined the above are working efficiently and effectively together. The statement warns of counter productivity when formal assessment is constant. It goes on however to state that to be successful, assessment must be founded in thorough analysis, not images, and should identify principles and means for instigating sincere reflection on management and service to educational and artistic institutional objectives.

A separate entry, titled *Évaluation*, in the same publication specifies evaluation of student progress, faculty effectiveness, courses, projects and performances, and relates to a program's approach to evaluation and quality control. In each written area of

concern, including evaluation approach, evaluation content, cultural and intellectual climate, curricular programs, development of individual knowledge, skills and artistry, and instructional evaluation, questions are posed as to how they are related to philosophy, mission, goals and objectives.

In their published document *The Assessment of Undergraduate Programs in Music*, (1996) the NASM acknowledges the recent climate in the United States concerning public perception of higher education, and the call for greater expressions of degrees of excellence. Concurrently is expressed the continued desire in higher education to maintain diversity, and that institutions seeking accreditation by the agency must complete self-assessment in relation to their unique mission. It should be noted that within this document, assessment is applied in relation to the self-study process, and is not equivalent with outcomes assessment as herein defined.

The CAAA (1990) cites justifiable reasons for accountability while arguing facts of real excellence are often obscured by general accountability questioning. They contend arts education in the United States is securely grounded in excellence and tradition, and as such must determine judicious, prudent ways to address issues of accountability. An initial step suggested is to determine assessment measures currently in place--generally falling under names not so "fashionable" but really containing all components of OA. They stress the importance of basing OA on ideals of improvement, not solely contemporary trends that currently meet notions of accountability.

In a phone discussion on March 3, 1998, Samuel Hope, Executive Director of the National Association of Schools of Music, explained why the NASM avoids use of the term assessment. He contends the word itself is ambiguous and problematic, and pursues the methodology rather than the ideal. He explains that use of the term evaluation is clear, and is reflective of constantly evaluating student performance, which obviously is "poured" back into program development-- "that's what a rehearsal is."

Hope (1998) interprets assessment as an attempt to translate for external bodies (who often don't care) what "we" do into terms they can understand, which in turn destroys and "waters down" the validity of the higher art form. Additionally, he warns the process becomes irrespective of content, which ironically becomes damaging to the practice of evaluation. He stresses that in art forms in particular, the inadequacy of attempting to use a technical approach in an artistic endeavor such as musical performance, doesn't work. He states evaluation done right includes assessment and adjudication. (Adjudication is a common term in music circles. It is the process of listening to individuals, small ensembles and large ensembles and making judgment decisions as to the quality and appropriateness of the performance.)

The ultimate goal of art is the final product that, in and of itself, requires intense development of assessment strategies. These strategies predate current trends and may be seen to conflict with the more recent wisdom on how and why outcomes assessment should be accomplished. In particular, the performing arts have traditionally employed concepts of immediate feedback that require instructors and programs to continuously evaluate performance standards and alter or continue practices as they exist in order to achieve a "work of art". The quality of the student outcome is inherent to the survival of an artistic performance. As a result, the emerging concepts of OA imposed by NCA accrediting standards may be interpreted by arts faculty as an infringement on their existing assessment practices and judgments regarding the artistic contributions of their students. It may also be that arts faculty consider the emerging institutional requirements irrelevant. How these faculty attitudes may impinge on the level of implementation of OA in performing arts programs has yet to be fully explored in the wake of new institutional requirements for OA in higher education.

While performing arts programs represent an example of academic effort that is particularly challenged in the implementation of OA, the experiences of these programs is of more general interest. All academic programs struggle with finding creative ways

to assess student outcomes that will recognize unique aspects of their particular programs while meeting the more general requirements imposed by external authority.

Study Purpose and Methods

The purpose of this study has been to explore more fully how institutional requirements for OA and the attitudes and beliefs of music faculty and music program administrators may be related to the implementation of OA in higher education. Information about attitudes (what people say they want) and information about beliefs (what people think is true) (Dillman 1978) was collected from a random sample of music faculty and program administrators in 104 NCA universities and colleges by means of two surveys. Table 1 summarizes the contents of both surveys--those sent to faculty and those sent to administrators--and Table 2 identifies the information type as described by Dillman (1978) as it coincides with the variable examined in this study.

Table 1

Summary of Variables Collected by Instrument

Faculty Survey	Administrator Survey
	Program Size
	Mandate
Level of Implementation	Level of Implementation
Use in Decision Making	Use in Decision Making
Definition Alignment	Definition Alignment
Attitude Toward OA	Attitude Toward OA
Faculty Perception of Administrator Attitude	

Table 2

Types of Information Described by Dillman (1978)

Information Type	Dillman's Description	Variable Examined
Beliefs	What people think is true	Definition Alignment
Attitudes	What people say they want	Attitude Toward OA
Behavior	What people do	Level of Implementation
Attributes	What people are	Program Size External Mandate
Combination: Beliefs & Attitudes		Faculty Perceptions of Administrator Attitude

The survey was constructed to identify faculty and administrator understanding of the NCA definition of OA (definition alignment), their attitudes about OA validity, and their perceptions about the level of implementation of OA in the music program.

Part I: Outcomes Assessment Implementation.

The Nichols'(1995b) model was followed, but modified to be appropriate for determination of the level of implementation of OA at the program level. The Nichols' design offers five levels of implementation, and scores on this portion of the survey are based on answers of Yes, No, Don't Know.

Part II: North Central Association Outcomes Assessment Guidelines.

Part II of the survey was developed by the researcher, based NCA stated guidelines for OA development and implementation, as found in the NCA Handbook of Accreditation (1994), articles in the NCA Quarterly publishings, and articles covered

in the literature review, authored by NCA authorities. Scoring was on a True/False scale, on statements that agree with, or contradict NCA stated guidelines and/or published recommendations for OA activities.

Part III: Validity of Outcomes Assessment.

This part of the survey was developed to determine individual's attitude toward OA. Questions were developed by the researcher based on variables indicated in the literature review. Scoring was on a five point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Statements were designed to elicit subjective responses.

Part IV: Demographics.

The demographics section was developed to collect information on tenure status, number of years in the field, number of years at the current institution, and self-reported level of expertise, experience, and awareness of outcomes assessment activities.

The Administrator survey also included a question about the size of the program to be used as continuous data, and a dichotomous variable of yes or no as to whether the institution mandates OA at the program level.

Part V (faculty member surveys only)*: Perceived Attitude of Program Administrator.*

The final portion of the survey administered to faculty members was developed to determine faculty members' perceptions of their program administrators' attitudes toward OA. Subjective statements were posed concerning administrators behaviors and attitudes concerning OA activities, and responses were rated on a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree, to strongly disagree. Statements were developed by the researcher based on the review of the literature. A summary of the foundations used for the construction of the survey instrument are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Survey Construction

Survey Variables	Foundation for Survey Construction
Level of Implementation	Nichols Model (1995b) & Villareal (1997)
Knowledge of NCA Guidelines for OA (Definition Alignment)	NCA Guidelines & Publications Villareal (1997) Chamberlain, et al. (1994) Zwier (1995)
Attitude Toward OA	Villareal (1997)
Faculty Perceptions of Administrator Attitude	Villareal (1997)

Pretesting the Survey

The survey was pretested by a group of professionals currently holding positions as faculty members or administrators in an institution of higher education that is accredited by the NCA. An examination of the participants' responses resulted in minor changes to the survey, including rewording of directions and spacing between survey sections.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of implementation of OA in music programs at four year institutions in the NCA accreditation region that are also accredited by the NASM, to determine attitudes and perceptions of faculty members and administrators toward OA, and to provide useful information on the relationship between faculty and administrator perceptions of implementation and effective use of

OA in music programs at four year institutions in the NCA accreditation region that are also accredited by the NASM. The hypotheses statements of interest in this paper are:

1) There is a positive correlation between the individual's understanding of OA (definition alignment--DA) and their attitude toward OA (ATT).

2) There is a positive correlation between faculty attitude toward OA (FATT) and administrator attitude toward OA (AATT).

3) There is a positive correlation between faculty attitude toward OA (FATT) and faculty perception of administrator attitude toward OA (FPAA).

4) There is a positive correlation between faculty understanding of OA (FDA) and administrator understanding of (ADA).

Analysis & Results

Of the 104 universities included in the sample, responses from 68 institutions were received (65% overall response rate). Correlation analyses and multiple regressions were applied to the data. This paper focuses on the correlation analyses conducted that are related to attitudes about the validity of outcomes assessment among music faculty and administrators, and understanding of the NCA definition of outcomes assessment among music faculty and administrators. Table 4 includes the relationship examined, the correlation statistic, and the observed probability of error for the analysis of the variables examined.

Table 4 indicates a negative relationship (r = -.24, sig. = .01) between individuals' understanding of the NCA OA definition and their attitudes about the validity of outcomes assessment to the music program. Therefore, as originally stated, hypothesis 1 was not confirmed. The analysis instead indicates that as understanding of OA increases, attitude decreases. Secondly, while no significant relationship was observed between faculty attitude toward OA and administrator attitude toward OA, there was a significant correlation found between faculty attitude toward OA and faculty members' perceptions of the attitude of their administrators toward OA (r=.32, sig.=.01). Finally,

Table 4 also shows that the level of understanding of the NCA OA definitions reported by faculty was positively related to the level of understanding of the NCA OA definition reported by administrators (r = .65, sig=.001).

Table 4

Correlation Hypotheses for the Study

Positive Correlations Between:	**Variables**	**R**	*p (Sig.)*
Individuals' understanding of OA (definition alignment--DA) and their attitude toward OA (ATT)	DA, ATT	-0.24	0.01
Faculty attitude toward OA (FATT) and administrator attitude toward OA (AATT).	FATT, AATT	0.2	ns
Faculty attitude toward OA (FATT) and faculty perception of administrator attitude toward OA (FPAA)	FATT, FPAA	0.32	0.01
Faculty understanding of OA (FDA) and administrator understanding of (ADA)	FDA, ADA	0.65	0.001

Discussion

The findings of a negative relationship between an individual's attitude toward OA and their understanding of OA was not anticipated. The logic behind the establishment of the proposed positive relationship was derived from the evidence in the existing literature which repeatedly points to misconceptions of what OA is and should be used for, in explanation of resistance to implementation of OA (Gibson, 1992; Lingrell, 1992; Nichols, 1995; Reid et al., 1996; Worthley & Riggs, 1992;). This is coupled with findings that attitude is often determined by perceptions (Wolverton, 1995; Zweir, 1995), ultimately driving the assumption that greater understanding and clarity improve attitude. That the reverse held true in this study may be due to the artistic nature of the discipline explored. Both Samuel Hope (March 8, 1998), and the CAAA (1990) voice concern that OA pursues the methodology rather than the ideal. Both sources stress the importance of basing OA on ideals of improvement, not solely on meeting current notions of accountability. In arts programs it is necessary to focus on the product, as opposed to the process, of individual creativity and artistry. The general consensus is that OA focuses on the process. Therefore it is possible the interpretation by arts faculty and administrators, of OA as an infringement on existing assessment practices that the institution deems irrelevant because they are not newly developed in response to the call for OA implementation is justifiable, resulting in the negative relationship identified in this study between attitude and understanding of the definition of OA.

Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 describe the variances between faculty members as a group and administrators as a group on reports of definition alignment and attitude. Hypothesis 2 observes the relationship between faculty attitude and administrator attitude. Although Stark et al. (1996), Fulford (1991), Derlin (1991), and Nichols (1995a) cite the importance of leadership in the implementation of change in general and program practices more specifically, it is apparent from the results drawn here that the

attitude specifically of faculty members is not related to the attitude of administrators, and the attitude of administrators is not mirrored by faculty members.

Nichols' (1995a) explanation that faculty will often form their opinion of assessment based on the *perceived* attitude of the departmental chair is upheld by this study. It is perhaps his clarification that there could be a difference in an administrator's attitude and a faculty member's perception of that attitude, that explains the acceptance in this study that there is a significant, positive relationship between faculty attitude and a faculty member's, perception of the attitude of their program administrator, while simultaneously negating a relationship between the actual, self-reported attitudes of faculty members and their program administrators.

The positive relationship found in this study between faculty and administrators in their definition alignment, indicating agreement in their understanding of OA, appears to confirm Stark et al.'s (1996) proposal that leadership is a major factor in effectively addressing individual differences of philosophy. This suggests that administrators who have a high degree of definition alignment of OA would encourage and enlighten faculty members in their definition and perception of OA.

Implications

The findings suggests certain implications for the understanding and implementation of OA program development, and for further research. First, was the notable negative relationship indicated between definition alignment (understanding of OA, as defined by the NCA) and attitude toward OA. This essentially shows that the more faculty and administrators knew about the NCA definitions of OA, the more negative their attitude and perceptions of the validity of OA were--ie. the more they knew, the less they liked it. This could be indicative of the unique artistic and creative properties of musicians, who would challenge the bureaucratization of an art form. It is inherent in any art form that assessment is continually taking place, in order to elicit the optimal output. It is on display for all to judge, and in that sense is often the most public

form of providing accountability within an institution of higher education--and this long before the advent of the current push for OA as a form of external accountability and program improvement. In music programs, attendance at concerts and recitals, published critiques and newspaper articles are all forms of addressing the validity of the program in question. The requirement of adding elements and/or originating new measures to "provide evidence of continual assessment" to that which already exists in efforts to provide validation may be perceived as an exercise in redundancy, taking time, effort and money from other, perhaps more worthwhile endeavors.

The findings of hypotheses 2 and 3 are related. What is interesting is that although there is no apparent relationship between the actual reported attitude of administrators by administrators, and the reported attitude of faculty by faculty, there is a significant correlation between the attitude of faculty members as reported themselves, and their perception of the attitude of their administrator. This suggests that although faculty and administrators may differ in how they perceive the validity of OA, it is what the faculty believe about the administrator's attitude toward OA that is related the attitude of the faculty member him/her self. Although no causal relationship can be claimed, this does suggests that administrators at least ought to be aware of their comments and behavior in regard to the issue of OA, and that there is a possibility this may affect the attitudes of faculty members toward OA.

Along this same line, it is notable that faculty definition alignment is related to administrator definition alignment--when administrators understand OA, so do faculty. Again, while no causal relationship can be claimed, it appears faculty and administrators do communicate concerning OA. Whether this is within the program, or is an institutional climate is not definitive in this study. Further studies may attempt to determine such. What is of value here is the indication that there are relationships between the attitudes and philosophies of administrators and faculty members. The causality of these relationships warrant further exploration in future research, and pose

glimpses into practical practices and solutions in the complexities of the implementation of OA in music programs.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that the varied voices of faculty and administrators in music programs can and should be accommodated in OA efforts. It is important that program administrators and faculty work together to identify and emphasize areas of agreement on what exactly OA is, the value of OA, and the facilitation of the implementation process. Particular aspects of OA implementation in the music programs should continue to be explored, as should their applicability to OA implementation in other academic programs.

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